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DEPARTMENT FOR WHA/CEN JASON MACK

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TAGS: [PINR](#) [PGOV](#) [CS](#)
SUBJECT: KEVIN CASAS, SECOND VICE-PRESIDENT-ELECT

REF: A. SAN JOSE 443

[1](#)B. SAN JOSE 591

[1](#)1. (U) Summary: Kevin Casas, chosen by Oscar Arias to be his second vice presidential running mate, will come into the third highest political position in the country on May 8 with scant political credentials. Only 37 years old, Casas is an academic and researcher who has never held office. Intelligent, poised, well-spoken, and full of ideas, however, Casas is the kind of bright technocrat that appeals to Arias. We expect that his principal responsibility in the Arias administration will be to oversee a reform of government institutions. End Summary.

[1](#)2. (SBU) Kevin Casas Zamora was born in San Jose in 1968, the youngest of five children of a mother from Costa Rica and a father from Cuba. All his siblings were born in the United States, and, because his parents were naturalized U.S. citizens, Kevin acquired U.S. citizenship at birth. Kevin's father, who left Cuba prior to Fidel Castro's ascension, owned and operated an auto repair garage in a working-class San Jose suburb.

[1](#)3. (U) Casas, always a serious student, entered the University of Costa Rica in 1984 as a valedictorian scholar. After graduating with a law degree (not a graduate-level program in Costa Rica), Casas worked briefly in research and consulting services before pursuing his master's degree in Latin American Government and Politics at Enland's Essex University. Casas completed his doctorate in Political Science at Oxford University in 2003. During and between his studies, Casas worked for several years as a research consultant, first at the UN Latin American Institute of Crime Prevention (ILANUD) and later at the Arias Foundation for Peace and Human Progress. Casas most recently served as consultant for the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) in the preparation of the National Reports on Human Development and the State of the Region Report on Sustainable Human Development in Central America. In 2003, Casas was awarded the prestigious European Consortium for Political Research prize for his doctoral thesis, "Paying for Democracy in Latin America: Political Finance and State Funding for Parties in Costa Rica and Uruguay."

[1](#)4. (SBU) Casas first met Arias through his involvement in the Arias Foundation for Peace and Human Progress, where he worked for two years between his master's studies at Essex and doctoral studies at Oxford. Arias and Casas quickly established a rapport, and Casas began writing speeches for Arias shortly before returning to England. Casas maintained contact with Arias throughout his doctoral studies and even had the same doctoral thesis adviser that had worked with Arias some thirty years earlier. Casas views Arias as a kindred spirit and mentor, but is hard-pressed to enunciate

exactly why Arias tapped him to be vice president. He acknowledges his role in helping the PLN to reach out to the country's youth, but also believes he has won Arias's trust and respect professionally.

15. (SBU) Arias has not explicitly identified the roles his two vice presidents will play in his administration. However, Casas's academic and professional experience in public governance make him well prepared to help implement the government reform projects that Arias envisions.

16. (U) Casas enjoys reading and is an avid squash player. He is married to Simone Bunse, a 32-year-old German citizen he met while studying at Oxford. They do not have children.

17. (SBU) Over the last few months, Casas has become an important Embassy contact.
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